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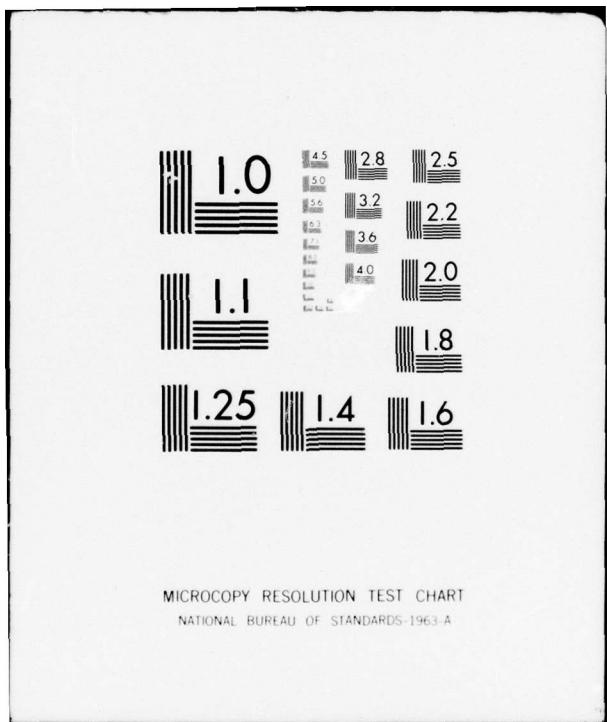
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STUDENT RESEARCH REPORT

MAJ Paul D. Mitchell
THE INSTITUTION OF PRAPORSHCHIKS
AND MICHMEN:
DEVELOPMENTS AND PROSPECTS

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THE INSTITUTION OF PRAPORSHCHIKS AND MICHMEN:
DEVELOPMENTS AND PROSPECTS.

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F O R E W O R D

This research project represents fulfillment of a student requirement for successful completion of the overseas phase of training of the Department of the Army's Foreign Area Officer Program (Russian).

Only unclassified sources are used in producing the research paper. The opinions, value judgments and conclusions expressed are those of the author and in no way reflect official policy of the United States Government; Department of Defense; Department of the Army; Department of the Army, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff of Intelligence; or the United States Army Institute for Advanced Russian and East European Studies.

Interested readers are invited to send their comments to the Commander of the Institute.


RICHARD P. KELLY
LTC, MI
Commander

SUMMARY

-- cadres of professional
noncommissioned personnel)

In this paper the author examines the development of the institution of praporshchiks and michmen (institut praporshchikov i michmanov) in the Soviet Armed Forces from 1971, through January, 1976. Attention is given to the status of praporshchiks and michmen, and to the methods of their selection, training and utilization, in an effort to evaluate the impact of the program on resolution of the junior cadre retention problem. The author maintains that the program will have only minor lasting impact on retention, and that as presently constituted and administered it does not represent, on the whole, a qualitatively new category of cadre personnel.

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INTRODUCTION

Many partial explanations have been advanced in the Soviet military press for the creation in 1971, of the "institution of praporshchiks and michmen" (institut praporshchikov i michmanov). It has been described as a response to the natural "dialectical" development of the armed forces with the accompanying advancing complexity of modern warfare. Cited also has been the rapid growth in educational level and awareness of youth entering the military service, and the consequent need for unit level cadres capable of providing the special educational efforts and enlightened leadership required to deal effectively with this new generation of soldiers. The growing complexity of the international political environment over recent years has prompted calls for increased vigilance directed against any manifestations of laxity, lack of responsibility, or breaches of discipline. In this regard, praporshchiks and michmen, as officers' first assistants, have been enjoined to be the first support of officers in maintaining military order and further strengthening discipline. Marshal Grechko has stressed the need to develop a "professional" non-commissioned cadre corps prepared to serve "for an extended period of time" and has described the institution of praporshchiks and michmen as this "qualitatively new category of command personnel".¹

All of these comments describe aspects of the basic problem of qualitative and quantitative insufficiency in non-commissioned officer (NCO) cadres; a problem which has long plagued the Soviet armed forces. The difficulty in retaining NCO cadres is illustrated by the system of designating a portion of new inductees to attend NCO schooling. Graduates of such schools become junior sergeants and sergeants directly, and may theoretically become senior sergeants with as little as six months service as a sergeant. Only an additional six months service as a senior sergeant is required to attain the highest enlisted rank, that of master sergeant (starshina).² Thus it is possible for an outstanding soldier to obtain the highest enlisted rank during his two year period of mandatory service. This situation results in an inexperienced corps of NCOs and consequently denigrates the authority and respect in which that position is held among both officers and enlisted men. Attendant also is the problem of further motivation of those individuals who elect to remain on active duty, whose careers within the NCO corps have "topped out" long before retirement age.

To the problem of obtaining a sufficient quantity of NCO cadres is added the qualitative problem. As Marshal Grechko and many others after him have acknowledged, there is a pressing need to develop junior cadres who combine the technical skills necessary to master the complex and constantly developing technology of modern warfare, with

a level of general civilian education adequate to effectively conduct training of new recruits. Under Soviet conditions this task is further complicated by the heavy emphasis on mandatory political training of all servicemen. NCOs receive essentially the same level of political training as does the rank and file. Praporshchiks on the other hand are expected to undergo more intensive, somewhat higher level political training which, hopefully, would enable them to play an authoritative intermediate role in political instruction of enlisted personnel.³

Reasons for the difficulty in retaining qualified NCOs are not difficult to find. Many, which are common to the armed forces of all developed countries, are amplified under Soviet conditions. Living and working conditions are severe, with a very high concentration of rigorous field training, often conducted under inhospitable conditions. This is magnified by the large contingents of Soviet troops manning remote border positions or garrisons in the Far North, Far East and Central Asia. Discipline is strict, often harsh, and relations between officers and enlisted men frequently coarse; facts which even Soviet authorities seem to recognize, as evidenced by numerous references to the need for greater courtesy and mutual respect within the military community.

A final important factor influencing retention is competition from the civil sector. Persons leaving the military upon completion of mandatory service have the right

to return to their previous place and position of employment, or to re-enroll in the educational institution and for that course of instruction in which they were enrolled prior to induction.⁴ Thus, persons approaching termination of mandatory service, who have good educational or employment prospects, have little economic incentive to remain on active duty in an enlisted status.

The pronounced militarization of Soviet society paradoxically also lends to the cadre retention problem. The competition between the two sectors for technically qualified personnel is often direct, in that the technical skills needed in the armed forces are frequently identical or closely related to skills needed in civilian industry. A skilled worker in civilian industry, or one possessing the prospects of becoming so skilled, particularly as his position is secure, will not easily be induced to choose a career as a military NCO.

It was thus principally in the hope of easing this chronic shortage of cadres that the institution of praporshchiks and michmen was created. The hopes placed on this new program were stated by Marshal Grechko in this manner:

The training of praporshchiks and michmen, together with the further improvement in training of sergeants and master sergeants will promote the complete resolution of the problem of manning the armed forces with command cadres, both in peacetime, and in the event of war.⁵

This paper analyzes the impact which the institution of praporshchiks and michmen is actually having on resolving this quantitative and qualitative retention problem. Treated herein are those elements of selection, training and utilization which shed light on the present and potential success of the program.

To avoid cumbersomeness, the term praporshchik has been used herein to encompass both praporshchiks and their michmen counterparts. No noteworthy differences between the two groups have been observed which pertain to the questions addressed in this paper.

SELECTION AND STATUS OF PRAPORSHCHIKS

Praporshchiks are of two general categories: the old and the young. Initially, most were former career NCOs with many years service, in some cases dating back to World War II. By 1974, this situation had dramatically changed. Most servicemen of this category desiring to become praporshchiks had already made the transition. Thenceforth, the ranks of praporshchiks were to be filled primarily from among soldiers just completing mandatory service, supplemented by returnees from the reserves. No definitive criteria of education or former rank were established. Praporshchiks were to be selected from among the best non-commissioned officers and soldiers completing mandatory service, with priority to those having general or specialized secondary education.

The praporshchik program has been accompanied since its inception by a massive recruiting campaign. Military commanders and political workers, local Communist Party and government organizations, military kommissariats, DOSAAF (The Voluntary Society for Assistance to the Army, Air Force and Navy), military and youth oriented newspapers all were assigned roles in publicizing the new rank and in filling it with personnel. The Ministry of Defense established specific requirements for military commanders and political organs, Party and Komsomol organizations, to identify and recommend praporshchik candidates.⁶

These efforts have been beset with problems, descriptions of which appear with monotonous regularity. Criticized primarily are insufficient attention to finding new praporshchik candidates, and poor selection practices, resulting in low quality candidates. Military kommissariats, which handle the selection of praporshchik candidates from among reservists, have been repeatedly charged with exercising inadequate care and lack of principle in their selection procedures, resulting in poorly qualified candidates being selected to attend praporshchik training academies.

There is evidence that some local kommissariats view the praporshchik academies as handy places to send troublemakers. One article described a reserve private selected

for training by a regional military kommissariat in the Lithuanian SSR who was extremely undisciplined and had drinking problems. It was subsequently learned that as a civilian he was a chronic drunk who constantly changed employment. Nevertheless, he was sent to the praporshchik academy with excellent references. The article concluded that the list of such examples could be continued.⁷

Another recent article charged that praporshchik candidates from the reserves were of significantly poorer quality than those obtained directly from the active forces. Many of these individuals reportedly had only the barest appreciation of the nature of service expected of them as praporshchiks.⁸

Criticisms of this type are not, however, limited to those praporshchiks returning from the reserves. Not atypical was an article in Krasnaia Zvezda describing a newly graduated praporshchik who disappeared following his graduation. When found, he was intoxicated and in the company of two disreputable individuals. Mediocrity, drunkenness and disciplinary infractions, it was later learned, had characterized his military service. Additionally, he had stated that he did not desire praporshchik schooling. Questioned rhetorically were the considerations which guided his military superiors in selecting this individual for praporshchik training. Significant also is the fact that this individual graduated

despite annotations in his academy records that he had "committed disciplinary infractions; was inclined to deceit; and required constant supervision".⁹

Discipline is enough of a problem in praporshchik academies to warrant the special attention of their staffs. Much stress is placed on "prophylactic measures". Proper order in places of study and living areas is strictly enforced. Meetings, lectures and films, directed at the further raising of discipline, are conducted, with emphasis on the "battle against drunkenness and alcoholism".¹⁰

The problem of quality, or lack thereof, in praporshchik candidates is in part a direct result of the "campaign" or push to fill their ranks. Military kommissariats have been directly criticized for striving to fill quantitative requirements to the detriment of quality. Failure of commanders to devote adequate attention to their recruiting responsibilities has also been a subject of repeated criticism. One clear example of this pressure will serve as illustration.

An article in Voennyi Vestnik accused certain supervisors in communications units of a lack of interest in recruiting and selecting candidates. Some units were greatly under strength in praporshchiks and misused those who were assigned. The article rather delicately suggested that responsible commanders were apparently not yet aware of how difficult it was to maintain continual combat preparedness without praporshchiks. Four months later in the same

journal there appeared an article in response to the earlier criticism in which errors in selection and use of praporshchiks in these units were admitted. This article detailed ongoing remedial measures. A plan was made which aimed to have all duty positions calling for praporshchiks filled by 1 June 1975. An unstated number of soldiers from the errant units had been chosen and sent to the praporshchik academy, and efforts to promote the rank among young soldiers on a continuing basis were initiated.¹¹ Clearly the rank is not selling itself to its potential membership, but requires constant pressure from above.

From the outset the goal was established that all praporshchiks should acquire as a minimum a general or specialized civilian secondary education. Sixty per cent of the first (1972) group of praporshchik academy candidates reportedly were so educated.¹² In early 1973, "over half" of all praporshchiks were said to possess secondary civilian education.¹³ Since that time no specific data regarding the educational level of praporshchiks has appeared. Repeated emphasis on the need for praporshchiks to attain this level of education, and on the opportunities for on-duty study toward its attainment, continued to appear in the press throughout 1974 and 1975, clearly indicating that the original goal still eludes attainment. The difficulty in meeting this rather basic

goal both reflects the status of the grade of praporshchik as a career objective, and, as will be discussed below, helps explain other difficulties being experienced in the further military training and utilization of praporshchiks.

The praporshchik program has been promoted since its inception as that of a select group of servicemen, closely approaching, in terms of ability and responsibility, the level of the junior officer corps. Praporshchiks are typically portrayed not only as "the closest assistants of officers" but as their "reliable reserves" and as the "bulwark of the officer corps". Examination of the factual status of praporshchiks, their privileges, rights and authority, indicates, however, that they are in most respects much more closely associated with the NCO cadre corps, which they were originally intended to replace, than with the officer corps.

The rights and privileges granted to praporshchiks and their families are stipulated by law as identical to those enjoyed by extended service enlisted men and their families.¹⁴ In this area are included such things as educational opportunities, living accommodations, medical and legal benefits, awards and inducements, and pensions.

Considerable emphasis may be found in the press on the opportunities that praporshchiks have to become officers. They are required to have completed secondary civilian education; to have completed three years successful service in the capacity of praporshchik or michman;

and to be credited with completion of a secondary military educational institution. The three year prior service requirement must be met prior to attendance at a secondary military educational institution. The rank of lieutenant is awarded upon successful completion.¹⁵ Importantly however, enlisted men and even civilian youth are afforded the identical opportunities, based on the same level of prior education, but without the three year prior service stipulation.¹⁶ The status of praporshchiks also corresponds closely with that of extended service enlisted men in the other areas mentioned above.

The single area of privilege in which praporshchiks and their families enjoy the same regulatory status as commissioned officers and their families involves authorization for admission to rest homes and sanatoria. This does represent a tangible advantage of praporshchiks over extended service enlisted men. Officers and their families are provided this service free of charge, whereas family members of enlisted men are required to pay fifty per cent of the cost for most categories of sanatoria and rest homes.¹⁷ Questionable, however, is whether this benefit is sufficiently valued by the serviceman to serve as a valid inducement.

A further important indication of the position of praporshchiks within the leadership structure is found in the superior-subordinate framework which governs their relationship to other servicemen. In the Soviet military

context a supervisor (nachnal'nik) is defined as one who has the right to give orders to subordinates and the responsibility to insure their execution. An officer has this authority with respect to all servicemen who are subordinate to him in rank. Pрапорщиков, however, enjoy this supervisory authority only with respect to those subordinates assigned to the same unit. By regulation, this position is identical to that held by non-commissioned officers.¹⁸

TRAINING

Training of new pрапорщиков is conducted in two phases: formal training in a pрапорщик academy and unit training. Those pрапорщик candidates who are obtained upon completion of mandatory service, or who have returned from the reserves are initially sent to a pрапорщик academy. Such academies have been established throughout the military districts, among Soviet Groups of Forces in Eastern Europe, and, for michmen, in the fleets. The initial corps of pрапорщиков was composed primarily of former career enlisted men who did not receive this school training. Determination of the necessity for a candidate to attend an academy is based primarily on the length and nature of his prior service. No firm criteria governing this decision have been published.

The academy program places heavy emphasis on political training. Encompassed therein are the goals of

"ideological tempering" (ideinaia zakalka) or strengthening commitment to the Communist Party and its objectives, and development of a "taste for agit-prop", enabling graduates to engage in political training of troops under their supervision. Candidates are expected to learn the Party interpretation of Marxist-Leninist teachings about war and the army, and to acquire the interest and ability to continue ideological studies on their own, thus enabling them to authoritatively interpret to the troops the meaning of current international events.

Probably of second importance in the curriculum is basic tactical training, having the stated objective of preparing praporshchiks to become future platoon commanders. Ideally, such training is to be conducted largely in the field with maximum emphasis on practical application.

The third major component of the curriculum consists of specialty training. Stated objectives for this training are relatively modest; limited to teaching the fundamentals of specialty skills. This, as will be discussed below, reflects more the limitations of the academies than it does objectives.

Integrated within all components of the curriculum is some stress on developing rudimentary pedagogical skills. The overall goal is to enable praporshchiks to undertake a significant share of the burden of unit instruction, whether it be in the area of political training classes,

the conduct of "socialist competition", leadership of unit Komsomol or Party organizations, or of more mundane tactical or specialized training. Included here are also such fundamentals as the constructing of schematic diagrams and the proper demonstration of training models.

Several major problem areas may be identified in evaluating the quality of instruction received. These relate to the quality of school cadres; the support and supervision which the academies receive; the organization of the academy system; and ultimately to the quality of the students themselves. Uniform quality among academies does not exist. Content and quality of training undoubtedly varies considerably, with the regional organization of the system precluding uniformity. Nevertheless, criticisms directed at individual academies, if published in central press organs, may safely be assumed to have widespread, if not universal application.

The weaknesses of praporshchik academies, as reflected by press criticisms, have remained constant from their inception through the present. Chief among them have been poor tactical training (attributed largely to lack of equipment, facilities and initiative by school cadres needed for on-the-ground training); inadequate development of specialist and pedagogical skills; and disciplinary and motivational problems, generally attributed to poor procedures of candidate selection.

Two examples will serve to illustrate. Inspection

of students undergoing final examinations in the academy of the North Caucasus Military District in 1975, revealed that in addition to those receiving marks of "excellent" and "good", some students earned only "satisfactory" marks. This in the Soviet parlance is euphemistical for what would be more candidly termed "not at all satisfactory". Some students displayed ignorance of even the "ABC's" of tactics, having "forgotten" to give orders to subordinate detachments and displaying other fundamental tactical weaknesses. The blame for this was placed primarily on the school, for failure to provide training aids; for lack of supervision; and for a generally uninspired and lackadaisical attitude by school officials. Secondary blame was placed on higher level organizations for failure to provide needed support, and on military kommissariats for a "formalistic" attitude toward student selection.¹⁹

A leading editorial in Krasnaia Zvezda revealed that academy graduates are insufficiently competent as instructors and organizers of socialist competition, and demanded that more attention be given to selection of cadets. It stated that because of faulty selection procedures, unqualified persons were being sent to praporshchik academies. As a result, a number of cadets had to be dismissed from the schools of the Central Asian and several other unspecified military districts.²⁰

To a very large extent the problems which plague the praporshchik academies are the expectable outgrowth of the nature and organization of the academy system. The system was thrown into operation very rapidly upon creation of the new rank. The formation on a geographical basis of a rather large number of small schools has precluded either specialization between schools or development of a differentiated training program within individual schools. Schools were expected to develop their own programs, utilizing largely locally obtainable facilities, equipment and support. Subsequent guidance to school officials has tended to be in reaction to observed weaknesses, rather than in the nature of positive, creative direction.

Gaps in formal training are attributed to the lack of necessary experience in organizing the training process, and to the need for simultaneous training of praporshchiks of various specialties. The latter problem is evident from comments relating to 1973 graduates of the Moscow Military District Academy, which reportedly prepared "a large group of company first sergeants; technicians; driving instructors; and specialists of various branches of service".²¹

Differentiation is needed not only based on military specialty, but on educational background and physical fitness. Praporshchiks are far from uniform in their level of educational preparation. Many do have complete secondary and occasionally higher education; however,

many others, especially in rear service units, have incomplete secondary education. The lack of differentiated training has been mentioned as one of the main reasons why some praporshchiks fall behind their contemporaries. Differentiation in physical training classes is also lacking. This fact has been decried, especially in view of the fact that students are of widely varied ages and physical condition, with those received from the reserves often less fit than those obtained immediately following mandatory service. It is evident from the foregoing that praporshchik academies have not been organized so as to best meet the stated objectives of training high quality junior commanders and specialists. They are particularly weak with respect to teaching of specialized subject matter and differentiation of students according to background and capabilities.

New praporshchiks, whether coming from an academy or in the case of more experienced individuals from direct appoint to the rank, are not to be regarded as finished products, fully ready to discharge the responsibilities of their new rank. Numerous articles have made reference to this fact, urged commanders to be attentive to the professional and personal needs of praporshchiks, especially to their successful assimilation into the unit, and have cautioned them to be tactful and inobtrusive in discharging these responsibilities.

Convincing commanders of their special tasks in the development of praporshchiks has not in all cases been easy. Commanders tend to view praporshchiks as more trouble than senior NCOs, due in part to the difficulties encountered in preparing them for responsible positions. Senior supervisors have been criticized for not getting involved personally in questions of selection, training and growth of praporshchiks, leaving this work to "second level people", as well as for "neglecting the personal needs" of praporshchiks.²³

The aspect of unit education which apparently evokes the greatest concern, judging by the amount of press attention devoted to it, is the development of the praporshchik's political knowledge and maturity. Stated aims in political training are to broaden the political horizons of praporshchiks, thereby strengthening their authority and enabling them to play a greater role in the training and guidance of enlisted men. To further these objectives, unit political training is designed to approach the level of that given to officers. Emphasis has been placed on developing not only comprehension of appropriate ideological tenets, but on teaching good habits of self-study, to enable praporshchiks to become convincing instructors.

This effort has not met with uniform success. Lack of political knowledge among praporshchiks is a frequent subject of complaint. Most particular is the comment that

praporshchiks know the factual material, but are weak on theoretical foundations. This is commonly attributed to over-simplification of instruction, and to the failure of instructors to appreciate that political instruction of praporshchiks is to be conducted on a level higher than that given to enlisted men.

One straightforward article connected the attainment of stated political goals for praporshchiks with the task of upgrading the level of their general education. This article frankly admitted that the 1973 political training program, which was conducted along the general lines of officers' training, was very difficult for praporshchiks to master, and recommended that the one year program be extended over two years.²⁴ This statement supports the evidence that the educational level, and probably the basic intelligence as well, of the average praporshchik is markedly inferior to that of the average officer.

Praporshchik councils have been created in all units of at least regimental size. They are intended to serve as a focal point for efforts directed at improving the duty performance, authority, conduct, living conditions and image of the praporshchik corps. The work of these councils has been described as including organization of "Praporshchik Days" and other meetings which typically involve lectures, methodological discussions and exchanges of experience among praporshchiks. They also have a "watchdog" function over the on and off-duty conduct of

praporshchiks, and attempt to identify and proselyte potential new candidates from the ranks.²⁵

Another lever of control and influence over praporshchiks is the unit Komsomol organization. Reportedly, this lever is not in all cases being properly utilized, due at least in part to the fact that many praporshchiks have reached the statutory age limit for Komsomol membership. By regulation, Komsomolites, who have reached 28 years of age and are not selected for leadership positions, leave the Komsomol.²⁶ According to one source, because of their age, some praporshchiks are not receiving the benefit of attention from the Komsomol. The organization's leaders were reminded that praporshchiks can do much for the Komsomol and must not be excluded simply because they are older.²⁷

These comments are worthy of analysis as another reflection of disparity between praporshchiks and the officer corps. Eighty per cent of the first, hand picked, group of candidates to praporshchik schools reportedly were either Communist Party or Komsomol members.²⁸ At the 30 January 1973 opening of the All-Union Conference of Praporshchiks and Michmen, Marshal Grechko remarked that 60 per cent of all praporshchiks were either Communist Party members (40 per cent) or Komsomol members (20 per cent).²⁹ As this figure would include the hand-picked group, it may be supposed that the overall figure is now lower since that group now represents a smaller portion of the whole. Thus, over 40 per cent of praporshchiks and michmen either

never belonged to the Komsomol, or left that organization without joining the Party. In comparison, fully 90 per cent of the officer corps consists of Party or Komsomol members.³⁰

UTILIZATION

Praporshchiks may be differentiated by utilization into five general categories: Platoon commanders, company first sergeants (starshiny), technicians of various types, non-technically qualified specialists, and political workers. The position of platoon commander is considered an "officer's duty" and is the highest level of authority to which praporshchiks are normally assigned. Those praporshchiks who are platoon leaders are largely former career enlisted men, who are generally long on military experience, but short on formal education. The position of starshina, or company first sergeant, seems to have become, for praporshchiks of the "command cadre" category, an intermediate position for the second rank, behind the more experienced group occupying positions of platoon commander. The position will probably continue to be occupied by both praporshchiks and NCOs for the foreseeable future.

Criticisms levied at this "command cadre" group of praporshchiks usually stipulate that while they are, on the whole, competent leaders, they are weak with regard to "theoretical questions". The Soviet definition of "theoretical questions" includes such considerations as methods

of technical servicing and maintenance of equipment in the field and small unit tactics, in addition to skills of pedagogy and psychology.³¹

The term "technician" as applied to praporshchiks encompasses such duties as communications and maintenance technicians, supervisors of radar detachments, senior mechanics, and other positions requiring specialized technical competence. Members of this group are said to be best prepared for their duties of all categories of praporshchiks, because those candidates possessing secondary or higher specialist education are usually assigned to such positions.

Praporshchiks utilized in the capacity of "specialists" include true specialists in non-technical fields, such as finance and mess hall supervision, and some who, judging by the capacities in which they have been utilized, apparently possess only limited specialty skills. Many praporshchiks occupy supervisory and other duties in warehouses, depots and supply points. Some are driving instructors and even photographers. Praporshchik-specialists may also be found in military construction detachments and in military industries.³²

Utilization of praporshchiks in non-technical supply positions runs counter to the stated intent of the praporshchik program. Criticism of this sort of mis-utilization exists. Commanders are counseled to view praporshchiks not as "supply specialists" but as commanders and

technicians, and to so use them. The clear implication is that the commander has the burden of creating qualified specialists out of praporshchiks not possessing necessary skills, through on-the-job training and extensive counseling and supervision.

Praporshchiks may be assigned to full-time political positions such as that of secretary of a battalion level Komsomol organization. Additionally, praporshchiks are called upon to conduct political-propaganda work in addition to, or as an integral part of their primary duty functions. They are expected to conduct political training, lead discussion of the significance of current international events, organize "socialist competition", and to occupy positions of leadership in company level Party and Komsomol organizations.

One other group of praporshchiks worthy of mention is that of praporshchik-pilots. One 1975 article described a helicopter pilot who was among the first graduates of the Saratov Military Aviation School. Graduates are awarded the rank of praporshchik.³³

The quality of praporshchiks' job performance is difficult to access. The newness of the institution and the fanfare which accompanied its creation served to dampen early criticisms and to "stress the positive". Early articles typically presented glowing reports about the performance of praporshchiks in their new capacities, tempered by restrained comments pertaining to desired future

improvements. Later criticisms have been progressively sharper with preliminary disclaimers less in evidence.

Praporshchiks have been criticized as deficient in leadership qualities and in habits of training and education of their subordinates. Some weaknesses in leadership by praporshchiks are in part attributable to inexperience, and are not unlike difficulties which might befall any young supervisor. These include lack of tact toward subordinates; harsh, coarse and loud behavior as a substitute for proper severity and various inconsistencies in performance.

Graduates of praporshchik academies have been singled out for special criticism. Many require continual supervision and only slowly improve their professional capabilities. Some do not display necessary severity toward their subordinates, and themselves violate military discipline.

Many criticisms of praporshchiks' on and off-duty performance suggest indifference, lack of enthusiasm and initiative in duty performance, and in general a lack of self-respect and pride in their work. One article described some praporshchiks of the Far Eastern Military District as "inert" (inertnye) and inexperienced people.³⁴ Also singled out have been examples of flagrant uniform violations, weak leadership traits, and of the tendency to simply "swim with the current" rather than to strive toward self-improvement. Drinking problems among praporshchiks, as well as among soldiers of other ranks, comprise one of

the most consistently addressed subjects of criticism.

Commanders and Party organizations have been tasked, and the stress on this task has been constant, to take all necessary measures to promote the authority and confirm the role of praporshchiks in the military collective. Commanders are encouraged to more confidently appoint the best prepared praporshchiks to officers' duty positions, and to entrust responsible tasks to other praporshchiks. Despite these massive efforts, there are clear indications that a sizable proportion of praporshchiks are not meeting expectations.

CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing analysis of the development of the praporshchik program to date leads the author to the conclusion that as presently constituted, it will have only minor lasting impact on resolution of the junior cadre retention problem. The program is a partial measure, which does not deal effectively with the root causes of the unattractiveness of military service to Soviet youth, and can thus not be expected to meet the retention objectives associated with its creation.

The overall status of praporshchiks is less comparable to that of officers than to that of NCOs. For this reason, the program is unlikely to attract significant numbers of quality soldiers, who would not otherwise remain on active duty in non-commissioned capacities.

Comparably sharp criticisms of those praporshchik candidates who are received from the reserves suggests that this element contains a substantial number of individuals who found themselves unable to make their way in civilian capacities, and returned to the military for this reason. Identification of sergeants with praporshchiks is sharply illustrated in a 1975 article written by a high ranking military officer which, in a manner obviously designed to evoke the comparison, twice referred to sergeants as officers' closest assistants.³⁵

Nor should the praporshchik program be considered a significant new source of commissioned officers. The lack of press publicity in 1975 (the first year of their eligibility) concerning praporshchiks who may have earned commissions, supports the author's conclusion that persons desiring and capable of becoming commissioned officers have more direct means of achieving this goal.

Although its impact on the retention problem will be small, the praporshchik program does afford other potential advantages. It offers a vehicle with which to distinguish and recognize excellence among non-commissioned cadres. This in turn could heighten the respect and authority which they enjoy. To meet this objective, selection criteria would have to be raised and adhered to, and a certain layer of duty positions at the top of the non-commissioned hierarchy designated exclusively for praporshchiks.

Thus far, attainment of this objective has been subordinated to the campaign to promote the rank and fill its numbers; an exercise which has had a negative qualitative impact. Once this campaign has run its course, and it is judged that few further quantitative gains are in the offing, refinements in the program may allow it to develop gradually into a relatively small, but truly select group of non-commissioned cadre personnel.

FOOTNOTES

1. A. A. Grechko, Vooruzhennye Sily Sovetskovo Gosudarstva (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1974), p. 223-24.
2. Ministerstvo Oborony SSSR, Poleznye Sovety Voinu (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1975), p. 10. The title starshina refers to both the highest enlisted rank, and in this context is usually translated "master sergeant", and to what has been the highest enlisted position in a company, here translatable as company first sergeant. Since the inception of the praporshchik program, both praporshchiks and NCOs have occupied the position of "first sergeant".
3. F. Fedchenko, "Na Politzaniatiiakh s Serzhantami" (In Political Studies with Sergeants), Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 19 (1973), p. 63.
4. Ministerstvo Oborony SSSR, Poleznye Sovety Voinu, p. 19.
5. Grechko, p. 227.
6. I. Repin, "Praporshchikam - Partiinoe Vnimanie i Zaboty" (To Praporshchiks - Party Attention and Care), Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 1 (1973), p. 32.
7. A. Basov, "V Shkolu Praporshchikov - Dostoinykh" (To the Praporshchik School - The Deserving), Krasnaia Zvezda, 30 September 1973, p. 2.
8. A. Smirnov, "Uspekhi i Proschety" (Successes and Failures), Krasnaia Zvezda, 7 September 1975, p. 2.
9. M. Tokarev, "V Shkolu Praporshchikov - Na Ispravlenie" (To Praporshchik School - For Reform), Krasnaia Zvezda, 22 October 1975, p. 2.
10. B. Likhachev, "Kommunisty Shkoly Praporshchikov" (Communists in the Praporshchik School), Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 3 (1973), pp. 51-52.
11. V. Kalinin, "Praporshchik - Prezhde Vsevo Koman-dir, Spetsialist" (The Praporshchik - First of All a Commander, a Specialist), Voennyi Vestnik, No. 11 (1974), p. 100.
12. Repin, "Praporshchikam - Partiinoe Vnimanie i Zaboty", p. 35.
13. L. Kozlovskii, "Praporshchiki Stanoviatsia v Stroi" (Praporshchiks Stand in the Ranks), Voennyi Vestnik, No. 3 (1973), p. 39.

14. Ministerstvo Oborony SSSR, Poleznye Sovety Voinu, p. 17.

15. N. Kalandi, "Nekotorie Voprosi Prokhozhdeniya Voinskoi Sluzhby Praporshchikami i Michmanami" (Some Questions Concerning Military Service of Praporshchiks and Michmen), Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 18 (1973), p. 87.

16. M. Ia. Parshin and G. F. Krivtsov, L'goty, Pensii i Posobiia Voennosluzhashchim Srochnoi i Sverksrochnoi Sluzhby i Ikh Sem'iam, (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1971), pp. 42-43.

17. Ibid., pp. 66-67. Information concerning the free accommodation of officers' families at sanatoria and rest homes was provided by Mr. G. M. Viktorov, Instructor, US Army Institute for Advanced Russian and East European Studies, based on his personal experience.

18. K. Bushmanov, "Ustav Vnutrennei Sluzhby" (Internal Service Regulations), Voennyi Vestnik, No. 11 (1975), p. 2; and Ministerstvo Oborony SSSR, Tolkovyи Slovar' Voennykh Terminov (Moskva: Voenizdat, 1966), p. 261.

19. Smirnov, "Uspekhi i Proschety", p. 2.

20. "Shkoly Praporshchikov i Michmanov" (The Schools for Praporshchiks and Michmen), Krasnaia Zvezda, 14 November 1974, p. 1.

21. V. Korchnev, "Novyi Otriad Praporshchikov" (A New Detachment of Praporshchiks), Krasnaia Zvezda, 10 June 1973, p. 2.

22. A. Kunitsyn and G. Andreev, "Politicheskaya Ucheba Praporshchikov" (Political Training of Praporshchiks), Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 16 (1973), p. 71.

23. O. Grigoriev, "Praporshchiki" (Praporshchiks), Voennyi Vestnik, No. 2 (1973), p. 10; and Kozlovskii, "Praporshchiki Stanoviatsia v Stroi", p. 40.

24. Kunitsyn and Andreev, "Politicheskaya Ucheba Praporshchikov", p. 71. Evidence that the problem continues to exist is reflected in more recent articles such as A. Shelepin, "K Novomu Pod'emu Ideologicheskoi Raboty" (Toward a New Advance in Ideological Work), Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 23 (1975), p. 19, which attributes praporshchiks' difficulties in mastering political training to a lack of good self-study habits.

25. See for example: Repin, "Partiinoe Vnimanie i Zaboty", pp. 34-35; "Sovet Praporshchikov" (Council of Praporshchiks), Voenyi Vestnik, No. 3 (1974), p. 126; and A. Nekrasov, "Rastet Masterstvo Praporshchikov" (The Skill of Praporshchiks is Growing), Voenyi Vestnik, No. 9 (1974), p. 64.
26. "Iz Perepiski s Chitateliami" (From Correspondence with Readers), Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 3 (1975), p. 86.
27. A. Golda, "Vishel iz Komsomol'skovo Vozrasta" (No Longer of Komsomol Age), Krasnaia Zvezda, 16 November 1973, p. 2.
28. Repin, "Partiinoe Vnimanie i Zaboty", p. 35.
29. "Vsearmeiskoe Soveshchanie Praporshchikov i Michmanov" (All-Army Conference of Praporshchiks and Michmen), Krasnaia Zvezda, 31 January 1973, p. 3.
30. P. Lukashin, "Uluchshenie Podgotovki Voennyykh Kadrov v Sveti Trebovannii XXIV s'ezda Partii" (The Improvement in the Training of Military Cadres in the Light of the Demands of the XXIV Party Congress), Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 11 (1973), p. 18.
31. Kozlovskii, "Praporshchiki Stanoviatsia v Stroi", p. 39; and Nekrasov, "Rastet Masterstvo Praporshchikov", p. 63.
32. Grigoriev, "Praporshchiki", p. 10.
33. A. Sorokin, "Nebo Praporshchika Viatkina" (The Sky of Praporshchik Viatkin), Krasnaia Zvezda, 21 September 1975, p. 2.
34. Grigoriev, "Praporshchiki", p. 8.
35. D. Abashin, "Serzhantam - Komandirskie Kachestva" (To Sergeants - Commander's Qualities), Voenyi Vestnik, No. 4 (1975), pp. 102, 105.

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4. Ministerstvo Oborony SSSR. Poleznye Sovety Voinu (Useful Advice to the Soldier). Moskva: Voenizdat, 1975.
5. Ministerstvo Oborony SSSR. Praporshchiki i Michmany (Praporshchiks and Michmen). Moskva: Voenizdat, 1974.
6. Ministerstvo Oborony SSSR. Tolkovyj Slovar' Voennykh Terminov (Explanatory Dictionary of Military Terms). Moskva: Voenizdat, 1966.
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9. Voennyi Vestnik, 1972-1976.